



## OPINIONS AS TO THE VALUE OF BIRDS

(Written Specially for The Bulletin.)  
A correspondent takes sharp issue with a recent "talk" about the value of birds, etc., as insect destroyers. He appears to be a man who sees things with his own eyes, makes up his own mind and doesn't accept statements at second-hand until he has verified them. He also writes a mighty breezy letter. I should like to print it all, but must content myself with summarizing, as fairly as I can, some of the more salient points.

He says he is a bird-lover: has put up houses for them and fed them winters; but he wants to be rational and is able to see their faults as well as their virtues. He is especially down on the "nature-fakers" who mostly hail from the city, on "mercenary Audubonists and Biological Survey fanatics." He doesn't conceal his personal opinion that the widely quoted story about the Pennsylvania farmers who earned a \$50,000 bounty by shooting hawks and owls only to suffer a loss of \$4,000,000 soon thereafter from rodent depredations "is probably one of the many lies told by this most industrious bunch of liars the world ever produced."

Especially does he deride the claims for the quail and the robin. I assume that under the latter name he refers to the migratory thrush (Turdus migratorius), which is commonly mislabeled "robin" in parts of this country. "Robin Redbreast" by the unusually sentimental. He remarks that he would rather have one toad in his garden than a hundred robins, and would rather have a hundred toads than one robin in the matter of injury to garden crops, berries, etc.

I confess that what he says about this particular nuisance warmed the cockles of my own heart. For, of all the birds that I have seen, the one that most resembles a robin as much as a crow resembles a canary. Hear my friend: "Robins are very abundant on my place, but I have never seen them eat any insect except earth worms, and these are supposed to be beneficial. I have seen the ground under one of the pear trees where robins roosted nearly covered with the seeds of grapes they had eaten; grapes from my vines. They carry the seeds of wild cherry, shadblow, wild grape, sumac, poison ivy, and many other undesirable plants and drop them along every fence, stone wall, telegraph and telephone wire, orchard tree. They carry from orchard to orchard such pests as San Jose scale. They carry on their feet from farm to farm such diseases as hog cholera, anthrax, foot-and-mouth disease. If they do the slightest good I had better be able to discover it. They squawk their strident discords when brown thrashers and catbirds are singing sweetly, spoiling the harmony."

Amen, Brother! As the old Quaker lady who had been spilled into a muddy ditch, by some fool speeder smashing into her carriage and not a word driver when that able swearer had exhausted the language of one-syllable profanity on the offender: "Thank you, John, for expressing my sentiments so well!"

Let me add one more charge to the indictment against this rampant bug of the air: He will pull up sprouting corn in the field, if other pillage fails short, and the twine which scares off crows hinders him not a bit. I know this, for I have seen it, and once shot one in the act, with his insides just stuffed full of my six-days planted corn.

As to quail: my correspondent evidently knows much more about them than I do. They seem to be rather plentiful in his vicinity, while they are exceedingly rare in my neighborhood. As to the assertions that they sometimes keep a potato patch clear of beetles, he relates this experience: "Some years since I captured some quail in December and kept them in

a large cage until the following May. During the spring I offered them every kind of insect I could find and even withheld all other food for 48 hours, yet could not coax them to eat any kind of insect.

I have examined contents of crops and gizzards of quail under magnifying glass many times, and have in no instance found remains of insect food. Their food consists largely of foliage, such as clover, sorrel, grass, wintergreen, sweet fern, etc., and some grain, weedseeds, acorns, chestnuts.

This is testimony at first hand, and is a negative testimony, in a sense. So far as this correspondent's test on his quail goes, it is conclusive. That he didn't eat bugs and couldn't be made to eat bugs! But, if another man finds other quail eating insects and their crops and gizzards filled with them, his testimony, if true, also, is taken into consideration. It won't quite do to dismiss all other witnesses as liars because their observations do not agree with ours. The famous shield of the fable had two sides. Perhaps Bob White has two sides, likewise. I believe my correspondent is telling the exact truth when he reports his observations. I can't doubt that such men as E. H. Forbush, state ornithologist of Massachusetts, Dr. E. F. Felt, state entomologist of New York, and Dr. Sylvester Judd of the national Bureau of Biological Survey are also telling the truth about their observations. As to the quail, Dr. Judd says in his bulletin on "the Bobwhite and other Quails of the United States in their Economic Relations":

"The Bobwhite is preeminently a seed-eater, 52.37 per cent. of its food for the year consisting of seeds." "Notwithstanding statements to the contrary by some of our writers, the Bobwhite eats insects in every month of the year. They form 15.05 per cent. of its entire food for the year. From June to August, inclusive, when insects are most numerous, their proportion in the food is 35.97 per cent. Moreover, the large proportion of insects in the food of the Bobwhite renders the services of this bird more valuable than those of many birds whose percentage of insect food, though greater, is published and unpublished. Of the insects eaten, the most conspicuous among the pests destroyed are the Colorado potato beetle, 12-spotted cucumber beetle, bean leaf beetle, squash lady-bird, wire worms and May beetles. From June to August, inclusive, insects and their allies form, as previously stated, about one-third of their food. Of these beetles make up nearly half, or 15.37 per cent., bugs 8.5 per cent., caterpillars 1.37 per cent., grasshoppers 2.38 per cent., miscellaneous insects 1.33 per cent., and spiders and other invertebrates 2.43 per cent."

Now, these figures are derived from the examination of hundreds and thousands of Bobwhite crops and gizzards from all parts of the country and in all seasons of the year. I cannot bring myself to consider such statements, following such long and painstaking wide-spread investigation, as "nature-faking." They are simply positive testimony as to what certain trained observers have actually found.

That other equally honest observers have failed to find similar testimony in other cases does not, necessarily, impeach the affirmative witnesses. When saw-wisdom Bruner in his monograph on Nebraska birds notes the finding of 101 Colorado potato beetles in a single Bobwhite's crop, I am strongly inclined to believe that he tells the truth: should he believe, even though I personally had failed to find a single beetle in a dozen crops. A dozen witnesses who didn't see a crime committed cannot offset the testimony of the one who did see it.

My correspondent asks: "Have you ever seen any evidence that any birds eat tent caterpillars?"  
Yes, brother, I have seen such evi-

dence, though I confess that the pests hereabouts don't seem to be kept down by the birds. Ornithologist Forbush of Massachusetts reports this experiment: "In a typical orchard in Medford, Mass., a little trouble was taken to attract the native birds. In weighing orchards canker worms and tent caterpillars were very numerous, but in the orchard in question the trees were injured seriously in only one or two instances, though no attempt was made to control the insects by spraying or other artificial means. Following is a list of birds observed feeding on the tent caterpillar in that Medford orchard: crow, chickadee, oriole, red-eyed vireo, yellow-billed cuckoo, black-billed cuckoo, chipping sparrow, yellow warbler." In either this or another reported case, a vireo with young was counted making 126 trips in a day to feed them, and a chipping sparrow with three fledglings in her nest made 183 trips in a day to feed them.

A hunting neighbor, who is also a keen observer, tells me that he has seen with his own eyes blue jays and crows both eating tent caterpillars from their webs. In the case of the blue jay he reports watching the bird for many minutes, and the way he wolfed 'em down was good for your eyes. He didn't undertake to keep count but he admits that the bird pretty well ate up the caterpillars. Far next he was at "I don't see for the life of me, where he could stop away inside him the caterpillars I saw him gobble down."

Dr. Felt, state entomologist of New York, calls attention to the special value of birds in aid of insect control, by reason of their mobility. While the skunk digs up lots of grubs and larvae, and the toad eats all the insects he can reach, and snakes also destroy many, all three are restricted in their work, confined by their own nature to limited localities. The birds, on the other hand, are the cavalry of the air, the Hussars and Uhlans and Cossacks of the allied armies. They can move to any spot where their food is thickest, and their eyes disclose such places before they even when in what seems aimless flight.

There is one point my correspondent brings out in this connection that ought to be hammered home hard.

## LETTERS FROM TWO STATES

### Tolland County COLUMBIA

Local Team Wins Opening Game—Library Would Miss State Aid—Auction.

Mr. and Mrs. Hewitt of New Haven were with the family of Fred A. Hunt Saturday and Sunday.

William A. Collins, Jr. and son Jasper, of Rocky Hill, spent the week-end with their father and grandfather, William A. Collins at Chestnut Hill.

Pastor Absent.  
Rev. E. O. Foster announced from the pulpit Sunday, that he would be absent after Wednesday, and would return for the remainder of the week and the coming Sunday, as he expected to be in Eastern Massachusetts, during that time.

Columbias Won.  
The opening game of the season was played on the Green last Saturday by the local nine and the Grex Club of Willimantic, Columbia won, 9 to 8.

The newly formed Columbia band was present and rendered several selections before the game.

William E. Bliss, Supervisor of Schools, in the northern portion of the state, with headquarters at Windset, was at his home in this place last week and calling on friends in town.

Would Miss State Aid.  
It is reported that the state is likely to withhold a year's grant of books to the various public libraries in the state this year. With a shortage of new books to select from, patrons may be tempted to read some of the books that have hitherto remained uncalled for.

Charles K. Hitchcock has purchased a handsome automobile.

Mrs. Ruth Tucker and daughter entertained relatives from Hartford and Windsor Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Will Clarke of New Haven spent the week-end with Mr. Clarke's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Willard B. Clarke.

F. A. Cook and family who have been occupying R. W. Porter's house on Columbia Green are to move to Pleasant Valley.

A teachers' meeting was held at the Center District schoolhouse Monday, under the direction of Supervisor Garrison.

Auction At Little Place.  
Mrs. E. E. Little disposed of her household effects Tuesday at public auction. The auction was well attended with fair results. S. B. West was auctioneer. Mrs. Little is boarding at J. A. Utley's.

### HEBRON

Special Mothers' Day Services to be held, in charge of Miss Dorothy Clark.

Mr. Dillett of Amston has moved into the house with Mr. Bloom.

Mr. John August has rented the Dick Hanna farm and is moving into the house.

Carl Jones has ended work at the post office in Amston.

Very few here have their gardens planted.

Mrs. E. C. Smith, Mrs. Loren Waldo, Miss M. C. Prink and Miss L. Bidwell were in Willimantic Tuesday.

Mr. and Mrs. E. F. Prink of Springfield and Mrs. J. T. Murphy of Willimantic were calling on friends here Sunday.

Mrs. E. F. Tennant and children were at Mrs. Tennant's mother's, Mrs. M. F. Frink over Sunday.

Miss Genevieve Little and Miss Nellie were at George Little's over Sunday.

Mrs. Marietta Horton of Hartford is visiting at Edmund Horton's.

Daniel Horton was home over Sunday.

Tomorrow (Sunday), May 9th, Mothers' day, the service will be in

No Use to Try and Wear Out Your Cold—It Will Wear You Out Instead.

Thousands keep on suffering coughs and colds through neglect and delay. Why make yourselves miserable by trying to suppress a cold? It is a serious ailment and epidemic the result of a neglected cold? Coughs and colds sap your strength and vitality unless checked in the early stages. Dr. King's New Discovery is what you need—the first dose helps. Your head clears up, you breathe freely and you feel so much better. Buy a bottle today and start taking at once.

Health Promotes Happiness.

Without health, genuine joy is impossible; without good digestion and regular bowel movement, you cannot have health. Why neglect keeping bowels open and risk being sick and ailing? You don't have to. Take one small Dr. King's New Life Pill at night, in the morning you will have a full, free bowel movement and feel much better. Helps your appetite and digestion. Try one tonight.

That is the value of predatory insects in checking the proliferation of destructive bugs. To most of us a "bug" is just a "bug" and to be smashed on sight. This is wrong. There are good bugs as well as bad ones. Prof. Webster in his book on "Insects" states that not five percent of the insects on a farm are injurious to crops while ninety-five percent, either prey on the injurious ones or on each other. My correspondent writes: "After carefully studying the subject for years I fully believe that if every bird was exterminated from our gardens and fields the predatory insects would hold the vegetation-eaters in as good check as is now done. I am not sure but it would be better done for it is not at all unlikely that insectivorous birds prefer the predatory to the injurious insects."

This is putting it rather strongly, but let me conclude with another story which this keen-eyed observer reports from his own experience:

"Years ago I noticed a piece of comparatively new land, a few stumps being still unrotted, and rented two acres for a potato patch. About the time potatoes were making their appearance above the ground, a nearby farmer came by and told me the place had been rented for two or three years to an old man for a garden and truck patch, and that he had allowed the bugs to eat up his potatoes, the year before. The admit beetle appeared in my garden soon after the plants, and soon nearly every leaf seemed to have one or more bugs and clusters of yellow eggs. I kept the garden for a year, and the appearance of the young, and when they seemed unduly delayed, began an investigation. I found a small black-spotted red ladybird and I found not quite as numerous as the adult potato beetles, and eating the potato beetle eggs about as fast as they were deposited. I kept the garden for a year, and the appearance of the young, and when they seemed unduly delayed, began an investigation. 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